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ABSTRACT

This guide is designed to assist in evaluating the learning environment of a day care center through observation. For the purposes of this guide, various aspects of the day care program are divided into categories, which in turn are divided into issues (essentials for which data can be obtained by observation. Categories and issues are as follows: (1) physical setting--spatial structure (use of space), materials, temporal structure (timing); (2) interactional setting (relationships)--teacher-child, child-child, staff, and teacher-parent; and (3) program--curriculum content, teaching strategies, and socio-emotional climate. Each issue is followed by a series of numbered questions, called variables, to be used in evaluation of that issue. Some suggested reading is listed in the introductory matter. (KM)

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GUIDELINES FOR OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT:

AN APPROACH TO EVALUATING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT OF A DAY CARE CENTER

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The form, more than the content, of this Observation Guide has been revised extensively for this second edition. We wish to thank the kind friends who made valuable suggestions for its improvement.

I.M. and F.J.P.

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THOUGHTS AND COMMENTS

THE PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE is to assist those who wish to evaluate the learning environment of a day care center through observation. While people with extensive experience in day care usually know "what to look for", as soon as they enter a classroom, those with skills in other fields are often bewildered by the day care environment. For different reasons, both groups have been asking for observation guidelines.

The purpose of observing is to gather information about some of the many things that determine a day care center's quality as a learning environment for children and to use this information to think about the program, what it does for the children and how it may be improved. It goes beyond the scope of this Guide to provide observation techniques, i.e., the methods of gathering information and of processing the data collected, or to provide suggestions on how to use the assessment for changing a program.

This Guide offers a broad range of issues to think about and it supplies many questions to focus observation. But it is not an "observation cookbook"; we do not contend that there is One Right Way to collect data for evaluation, nor do we claim that the issues we have listed are comprehensive or even the most important for each setting. They are just some of many relevant program features to consider, reflecting what <u>may</u> be, not necessarily what will or can be observed.

Before we explain the organization of this Guide, we will take a brief look at the state of day care today, discuss the kinds of evaluations recommended and describe how we came to write this pamphlet.

A LOOK AT DAY CARE TODAY

In some form or other day care centers have been around for about 100 years but only lately have they become a focal point of interest for a widespread and diverse group. Although the basic point of departure is still one of day care for young children of mothers who must work to survive, the concept of all day care for young children now transcends the economic survival issue. For one thing, women desire to engage in a wider range of roles than those assigned to them by the traditional division of labor between men and women, and from this point of view, day care represents the possibility for a social, personally satisfying, and productive role for the mother while at the same time assuring good care for the child. For another, there is a growing politically conscious group that sees in day care an opportunity to provide children with more socially relevant values than are easily transmitted through the network of fractured nuclear family life. There are also people who stress the potential of day care for strengthening family relationships, by allowing a feasible alternative to institutional (or foster) care for young children of a mother too ill or too burdened to be able to provide the kind of steadily supportive environment for children she would wish. Still others see the opportunity for supplementing home experiences with particular types of educational group experiences.

Whatever the reasons for day care, today the vision is highly unlikely to restrict itself to mere custodial care. For early childhood educators the vision is hardly new, as they have been struggling actively for a long time to upgrade the quality of children's services, insisting that particularly all day, year round programs become responsive to developmental needs of young children.

At present, the difficulties of attaining not only enough centers, but quality day care for the families needing and wanting such care for their children, are compounded by grossly inadequate public funding. There is no telling how long it may take this country to catch up with much poorer lands whose respect for children has found expression in the high priority given to the support of day care. Meanwhile, as need and interest increases, many new centers for infants, pre-schoolers and school age children are springing up and are kept going with admirable persistence and ingenuity.

This trend is likely to continue and with it comes the inevitable confusions and doubts, the reflections on priorities and procedures, and above all a desire for verification of goals actually being met--some sort of assurance that the tremendous expenditure of human effort, which good day care requires, is worthwhile.

GOALS FOR DAY CARE

Just as there are different reasons for day care, there are also different ways of viewing its goals. This is as it should be; a proliferation of viewpoints and approaches expressive of diverse life

styles, child rearing practices and educational values seems more likely to create dynamic learning experiences for children than a simple "scientifically" constructed mode. This is not only because there is little agreement among the proponents of theoretical orientations and, therefore, good reasons for a position of modesty concerning the "correctness" and universality of any one approach. Even more important, the development of children cannot possibly be viewed separate from the social context in which it takes place.

What is especially useful for one place may not be so important in another.

> For example: A given community may conclude that the most significant contribution to the children's well being would be a balanced diet. The child care center could support this priority by providing three well-balanced meals a day for the children and by encouraging parents to increase their knowledge about nutrition and food preparation through demonstrations and written materials. Involving the children themselves in the preparation of new foods, in school, would enhance their total learning as well as their pleasure in eating nutritious foods. Another neighborhood group might place its priorities on helping children know and take pride in their own community. This concern would be reflected in frequent walks about the neighborhood, visits to specific places, visitors to the center and in many other program activities aimed at increasing the children's knowledge about significant people, places and activities of their community.

But we would like to suggest that, despite their different emphases and priorities, day care operations share certain fundamental goals. One of these is to help children become competent learners. To this end, a child's experiences in a day care center should be characterized by continuity rather than fragmentation, by an opportunity to develop multi-dimensionally rather than merely to accomplish narrow

objectives, (such as being "prepared" for outmoded educative systems[1]), by active modes of learning and by pleasure in his own expanding functioning.

Furthermore, inherent in our concept of day care, no matter what its emphasis, is the inclusion not only of a range of educational experiences but also the range of family-related experiences that children naturally encounter in their home environment. It stands to reason, for example, that while in a half-day program many children may gain from contact with children of a similar age, in a day care center, during the long day, it may be crucial for the children to have exposure to children of different ages as well. And while it enriches a Head Start morning group to have men as well as women teachers and to meet with a variety of other adult models from the community, these become essentials for day care centers.

Depending on age of children and other variables, a three-hour program may wish to emphasize group activities, but any child in a center for a long day must be allowed to follow his need for occasional privacy and for one-to-one intimacy with someone. Without such provisions, a nine to eleven hours per day, year round program runs the danger of "institutionalizing" children, rather than helping them become responsible members of their group.

A child in day care, as at home, needs the option, at least some of the time, to work independently of others, to refuse participation in group projects, to follow his own interests. We find that

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[1]Outmoded not in terms of widespread practice, but in light of contemporary shifts in time and space, insights and adaptational requirements.

there is confusion in this regard, with people mistaking mindless compliance for "group spirit" and condemning the support for the child's emerging self system as a celebration of competitive individualism, or interpreting the yielding of personal pursuits of learning goals as "being cooperative."

While there is no evidence that day care "destroys the family" and much evidence to the contrary, any day care facility must work actively to strengthen family interactions. Considerations, important to any undertaking involving small children, include collaboration between center and family, support by the center during any family crisis, manifested acceptance of parental values and prerogatives and certainly an approach that is non-competitive and which clearly differentiates the functions of the center from that of the home. These elements are absolute essentials of any decent day care program, whatever its particular mode of operation.

EVALUATIONS RECOMMENDED FOR DAY CARE

It is crucial to ascertain whether and with what degrees of consistency the above mentioned procedures become actualized as educative strategies. To answer the needs for verification and also to establish a valid base for modifying any segment of the program, a center must wish to evaluate its learning environment. Just as there can be no universally applicable perfect model, there can be no viable program for children without continuous evaluation, resulting in improvements. This calls for a variety of evaluative measures.

The person actually working with the children in a center has a different perspective from the outside evaluator or from the parent of a day care child. The pediatrician or Public Health nurse or the community aide contribute yet other points of view. All can share in illuminating the many facets of a program.

Teachers, of course, evaluate all the time. Each time he/she[2] makes a conscious decision about her teaching strategies, each time she notes a child's progress in a specific area of functioning, each time she shares an observation about an activity with another staff member or with a parent or with the children, the teacher is in fact engaging in evaluation. When a teacher decides to let children cook string beans for their own lunch, when she changes the nap time sequence for certain children, or she plans for a trip to the post office, when she collects nail kegs and makes drums with the children, such decisions (provided, of course, they are made in the service of the children's development rather than adult convenience or whim), are based on careful observation and evaluation.

Through observations, teachers can implement immediate as well as long term goals for each child, in the context of the overall program. They scrutinize the program itself in the light of new insights and are called upon daily to apply critical judgment on the effect of their own procedures. Teachers of young children, therefore, learn to become keen observers, a skill that can be taught to, and practiced

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[2]To avoid the awkward duplication of pronouns, we will use the feminine gender for teachers throughout the Guide. No offence intended to male teachers; on the contrary, we acknowledge with pleasure the increasing numbers of men in day care work.

by, anyone with the sensitivity and objectivity basic to teaching. Day care administrators sometimes forget that there is a direct relationship between availability of teacher time for planning based on careful evaluation and the quality of a program; the teacher who never stands back observing is rarely the teacher who helps children progress.

One of the most helpful evaluative techniques for teachers is a periodic summary, in a well organized form, of their observation-based (rather than "opinionated") understanding of each child's progress in major developmental areas.[3]

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[3]Useful resources for acquiring these techniques are:

Almy, M. and R. Cunningham, Ways of Studying Children. A manual for teachers. New York, Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1959;

Cohen, D. and V. Stern, Observing and Recording the Behavior of Young Children. Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1958;

Cook, P. and R. Freedman, A Process for Observing Self-Esteem in Children, Cambridge, Mass., Abt Associates, 1972;

Doak, E., A Guide for Teacher Recording in Day Care Agencies, New York. Child Welfare League of America. Revised edition (L.B. Emerson) 1966;

Knock, A.P., et al, "Descriptions Used by Teachers in Recording Preschool Children's Classroom Behavior," Research Report, Vol. 7, No. 25. Chicago Institute for Juvenile Research, 1969;

Wright, H.F., Recording and Analyzing Child Behavior, New York. Harper and Rowe, 1967.

For greater teaching effectiveness, such summaries are supplemented by shared evaluations among the teaching team of a given group of children. Not only each child's progress but the program itself requires constant assessment by the teaching staff. This is a prerequisite of meaningful teamwork anywhere, but is of special importance in day care, since adults work in shifts and depend on information from each other. To be meaningful, such evaluation must be a continuous, ongoing process, rather than a once-a-year required exercise.

Next, there is the total day care center community: staff, (including, of course, the cook, maintenance people, the secretary, etc.), parents, related agencies, all of whom can share their different perceptions and thus add to the assessment of the program.

Communication between staff can take place through conversation, or it might be in written form. Video or tape recorders, if available, are also good tools for shared evaluation. Important is that evaluations be explicit, based on facts and shared with--not kept secret from--the people involved in the center.

To these "in-house" evaluations, an important dimension is added by outside observers, i.e., people not directly involved in the operation of the center but knowledgeable about its mission. The advantages and disadvantages of both "inside" and "outside" assessments are well known and both are needed.

But, while outside assessment of early childhood programs (particularly those receiving public funds), has become routine,

methodologies for so doing have left much to be desired. Evaluations are frequently carried out through the highly questionable practice of basing judgments about a program on the children's test results, giving segmented and thus inadequate information about the children's development and unreliable information about the program. The very choice of tests tends to shed more light on the investigators priorities and biases than on the center. Herbert Zimiles, in his critical analysis of such procedures[4], shows clearly that the constant factor for judging the effectiveness of an educational program lies intrinsically in the observation of certain aspects of learning environment and the children's behavioral responses.

Many observation instruments, however, appear to be borrowed from other research areas, or adapted from observations of a different age level, in other contexts. Furthermore, they seem to pay little heed to the unique features of a long day program or to class, ethnic and cultural variety represented by the children using the center. Instead they tend to stereotype children, e.g., as "disadvantaged", "nonverbal", etc. An even more serious limitation to meaningful evaluation lies in the instruments' segmentation of information that obscure the interdependency between different features of the day care learning environment.[5] At its worst, there exists a dangerous

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[4]"Research in Early Child Development -- What are We Learning from Different Research Strategies?" Paper presented at NAEYC Symposium, Nov. 4, 1971, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

[5]An example of this interdependency might be the effect of the teacher's commitment to children learning through exploration and discovery on the kinds of relationships fostered at the center, between adults and children, among children and among adults, as well as on the program, in terms of particular curriculum procedures and the general feeling (tone) of the classroom and also on the physical setting, room arrangements, time sequences and selection of material.

judgmentally determined guessing game, couched in "scientific" jargon. At its best, there are sensitive observations of discrete program features. None that we have sampled seem to provide a reliable framework for assessment of the impact of day care on the development of young children.

DESIGNING THIS GUIDE

Our concern over the inadequacies of presently available day care evaluation instruments evolved from a recent perusal of the available literature, special studies, project descriptions and project reviews, proposals, etc. As consultants to Socio-Technical Systems Associates, investigators engaged in multi-dimensional assessment of a day care system[6], we searched for instruments suitable for classroom observation that would yield relevant information about a fit between program goals and the learning environment. Unable to find a schedule that adequately reflects basic principles of child development and salient characteristics of day care education, we decided to take a fresh look at the observable dimensions of the day care learning environment.

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[6]We are doubly grateful to Dr. Henry Wechsler of the Socio-Technical Systems Associates for this opportunity. First, because it was a great pleasure to collaborate with this insightful and committed professional; secondly, because it compelled us to organize into a comprehensive scheme our long years' experience as teachers, administrators, researchers of inner city children and day care programs.

It became clear to us that certain basic elements are essential for any instrument useful in assessing a variety of day care centers. Such a measure must be:

a. adequately sophisticated to get at basic concerns;

b. simple enough to be widely serviceable;

c. extensive enough to touch the spectrum of occurrences in day care centers; and,

d. sufficiently directed toward observable, behavioral responses so as to eliminate the necessity of prolonged or special training on the part of the observer and to prevent subjective feelings and interpretations from slanting the results toward personal biases rather than pointing out objective findings.

ORGANIZATION OF THIS GUIDE

To assess the quality of an educational operation, one needs to think about the features that may contribute to its level of adequacy. In this Guide we refer to these features as ISSUES. For instance: "Arrangement of time as a reliable support of learning", and "Mutuality of trust between teacher and child" are both issues.

The temptation is great to single out <u>one</u> issue as the most important but this is not possible. The issues are far too complex and interdependent, to allow for the selection of just one, or even a few issues, on which to base valid judgment.

To make thinking about the many issues more convenient, we have organized the various related aspects of the day care program into CATEGORIES, to be considered in turn. These categories concern

themselves with the physical setting and its impact on children and adults; the program content in relation to stated and implied goals for learning; the teaching strategies used to implement the program and the range of their effectiveness; and the general social and emotional climate within which the program is carried on and its impact on children, staff and parents. (The list of categories will be found on page 1.

But how will the evaluator decide in which ways the issues of a given category are being handled in a center? To avoid guessing or making opinionated judgments, the evaluator needs to get into the classroom, playground, etc., and observe what is actually happening. We have therefore translated the issues into a wide selection of VARIABLES, that may guide observation in the setting. These variables appear in the form of questions, listed immediately following each set of issues. The questions: "What adjustments are made to permit the older children to engage in activities longer than the very young?" and "Do children appear predominately trustful of the teacher or do they seem apprehensive, sullen or 'frozen' when contacted by her?" are both examples of variables.

Although we have been careful to avoid jargon and unnecessarily difficult expressions we also have been reluctant to "water down", or to oversimplify matters. Some of the issues presuppose more knowledge of child development and day care programming than do others. Observers would do well, in any case, to familiarize themselves with the essentials of day care center operations and to

acquire an understanding of Early Childhood. In order to help the observer focus on the meaning of the more complex variables, we have provided actual examples from classroom observations. But it is the variable, not the example, that the observer looks for, as the examples given in this Guide may not necessarily be found in other places. Instead, the observer will find examples specific to each setting.

To summarize: The categories used in this Guide allow the observer to deal with one area of the day care environment at a time. The issues serve to direct the observer's attention to essentials within each category, for which information can be obtained by observation. The variables are the questions designed to guide the observations.

> For example: The first issue under "Physical Setting" addresses itself to spatial structure in terms of adequacy of facilities both indoors and outdoors, with consideration for number and ages of children. A simple count of children and square feet provides too little information to be useful in determining "adequacy." At least six questions, observational in nature, are provided to provide specific data, such as about space available for children to move about without bumping into each other, amount of floor space free for activities, size and arrangement of dramatic play corner, etc. Each separate question pinpoints its own contribution to the issue, calling forth objective findings rather than judgmental impressions.

Observers are advised to familiarize themselves with observation techniques and to observe regularly. The value for evaluation of one-shot visits are questionable. No single observation makes allowance for the range of unexpected developments which change regular procedures, nor does it allow for the "off day" where a teacher's strategies may vary from her usual approach. Several

observations are needed to make findings valid. The range of questions directs the observer's attention to many specifics which combine to formulate a more complete answer to any given question. This approach is based on the premise that anything of significance which one can observe will recur at different times and in different ways.

It is also important that the observer document each assertion with detailed evidence. A mere "yes" or "no" answer to a question does not provide adequate information for an assessment of any issue.

The questions may seem extensive and repetitive. The length and the overlap are designed to compensate for the inevitable variation in observable detail and to allow for connections between issues across categories. Observers with experience in the field can devise their own shortcuts. We do not view this observational scheme as a "definitive instrument" but rather as a possible model, to be refined, extended and modified. Using this approach it would be relatively simple to construct a rating scale or to devise a number of focused systematic measures.[7] It is our hope, that the balance between discrete items and interconnecting variables be maintained in order to insure data that reflects the complexity of a day care center's impact on a child's development.

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[7]For useful suggestions and examples, see:

Bank Street Follow Through Evaluation Check Lists, Bank Street College of Education. New York, 1970;

Biber, B. et al, Promoting Cognitive Growth: A Developmental-Interaction Point of View, NAEYC. Washington, D. C. , 1971;

Continued...

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[7]Useful suggestions continued:

Cazden C. et al, "Evaluation In Day Care Centers: Summative and Formative," Day Care: Resources for Decisions, E. H. Grotberg (ed.). Reprinted Day Care and Child Development Council, Washington, D. C., 1972;

Levine, S., "Preschool Social Competency Scale," Development of A Social Competency Scale for Preschool Children, HEW, Office of Education, Washington, D. C. 1968. (ERIC ED 020 004);

Minuchin, P., "Correlates of Curiosity and Exploratory Behavior in Preschool Disadvantage Children," Child Development, p. 42, 1971.

Stodolsky, S.S., "How Children Find Something to do in Preschool," University of Chicago, 1971;

Webster, P.R., "The Teacher Structure Checklist: A Possible Tool for Communication," Young Children, NAEYC, Vol. XXVII, No. 3, Feb. 1972.

OBSERVATION GUIDELINES FOR DAY CARE CENTERS

(Specifically geared to 2½ - 6 year olds)

CATEGORIES

Consider the center as it contributes to the children's learning in terms of the following broad observable categories:

A.	PHYSICAL SETTING:	1. Spatial Structure (Use of Space) 2. Materials 3. Temporal Structure (Timing)
B.	INTERACTIONAL SETTING (Relationships)	1. Teacher-Child 2. Child-Child 3. Staff 4. Teacher-Parent
C.	PROGRAM:	1. Curriculum Content 2. Teaching Strategies 3. Socio-Emotional Climate

Within each category are specific elements on which to focus attention. We have called these ISSUES. They include essentials for which data can be obtained by observation. A section of numbered* questions (VARIABLES) will follow each category of ISSUES. These questions may guide observations in the setting. The actual observations can then be used to think about and discuss each one of the ISSUES and to assess the various aspects of the center. It may be necessary to select one or another category for observation at a given time. This will yield important information about a segment of the program. However, all of the categories need to be considered to get a true picture of a center since the issues of various categories are inter-related and interdependent.

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*Numbers are used for the sole purpose of easy identification of the VARIABLES; they do not represent priority order.

A. PHYSICAL SETTING: (ISSUES)

Consider the ways in which the physical setting reflects careful thought for each child's developmental progress in physical, social, cognitive and affective areas.

1. Spatial Structure (Use of Space)

Adequacy of facilities, both inside and outdoors, in terms of numbers and ages of the children and the number of hours they spend at the center.

Suitability of room arrangement (and outdoor space), in relation to large group, small group and individual activity

Adequacy of spatial organization for arranging clearly defined activity areas.

Consistency between the way space is arranged and the educational goals of the center.

Suitability of the spatial structure for the requirements of the particular group using the center.

Spatial structure indicative of active learning, with arrangements for minimizing interference among various activities.

Consideration for the long day children spend in this environment, as reflected by spatial arrangement of the facilities.

Provision for a child's privacy through structuring of the environment. (Also provisions for sick children.)

Use of space expressive of respect for each child, his possessions and his work.

Adequacy of the content, function and appearance of displays.

***Observers suggestions for alternative spatial arrangements.

(To facilitate the evaluation of these Issues, in regard to a given center, a number of VARIABLES, directly observable in the setting, are suggested by the questions on the following pages.)

A. PHYSICAL SETTING: 1. Spatial Structure (Use of Space) (VARIABLES)

1.1 Describe the physical plant and such features as light, temperature, ventilation. How attractive, tasteful, appealing to children is the setting? Is the place especially suitable for a day care center or chiefly make-shift, barely functional? Which features are adequate, which inadequate? How functional are the facilities for the children's outdoor and extra clothing? What provisions are there for a child who becomes ill?

1.2 Is there sufficient space (indoors and outdoors) so that children can move about freely without constantly bumping into each other or into objects?

1.3 Is there proportionately more floor space and more unobstructed area for sensory-motor play for 2½ and 3 year olds than for 4 and 5 year olds?

1.4 What activities can the floor space accommodate? (Individual, whole group?)

1.5 Are tables all near each other or are there clusters of tables distributed in the room? Any small tables set aside where child can work by himself? Are tables and chairs at the same place all day? If they are moved, for what purposes?

1.6 Which clearly defined activity areas are there? (i.e., manipulative work, creative activities, block building, wood work, dramatic play-doll corner, dress up, puppets, etc. - science area, reading corner, etc.)

1.7 Describe relationship of floor space to activities. (e.g. is sufficient space for building adjacent to the blockshelves?) Is there a space to look at books right by the book shelf? (Floor space with rug or small table with chairs, rocking chair, --or what?) Note amount of light, freedom from distracting noise, provisions for privacy.

1.8 Which materials are placed attractively, inviting use by the children?

1.9 Is there a well defined dramatic play space or does the equipment merely line the walls? To what degree does the dramatic play area encourage children to move about comfortably, push a doll carriage, put on dress-up clothes, etc.? Is there a small table with chairs in addition to floor space? What provisions are there for privacy?

1.10 Are there tables near the shelves that hold manipulative toys, games and other table activities? (e.g., crayons, magic markers, scissors, paste, tinker toys, and counting games, beads, etc.)

1. Spatial Structure (Use of Space) (VARIABLES), Con't.

1.11 Are there painting easels? Are they placed in a lighted and protected area? Can several children paint near each other? Where are the accessories? (i.e., paper, brushes, paints, smocks, drying rack.)

1.12 Outdoors, are there spaces available for running, bike riding, digging, climbing, etc.? Describe.

1.13 Are most materials organized in such a way that storage areas and work space are close to each other?

1.14 Which activity area contains all the materials that pertain to it, which are distributed around the room (i.e., is paper next to crayons and scissors and paste; are little cars, boats, wooden or rubber people, and other such accessories, right with the blocks; pieces of wood and carpentry tools with a work bench, books at reading corner; pots and pans, dishes, dolls, dress-up clothes, missor, sink, stove, etc., in dramatic play area?)

1.15 Is there a grouping of the vigorous and the more sedentary types of activities? Describe.

1.16 What protection is there for block building space so that children do not unintentionally run into buildings?

1.17 How does the arrangement of furniture allow children to work without the distraction of other children chasing past them?

1.18 What plan is there for children to orient themselves and find what they need? Which of the materials are easily selected and put away, which do children have to search for or request from the teacher?

1.19 Is there enough for several children to play together? (i.e., are there enough materials, enough play dishes for several children to play together, two telephones to talk to each other, several boxes of crayons, at least six pairs of scissors, etc.?) Note materials that facilitate collaborative activities.

1.20 What arrangement is there for teacher's supplies to be out of the children's reach? (so that they clearly know what is for them to handle and what is for the teacher)

1.21 What place is there where a child can get and does get off by himself* and have some privacy? If there is no such place either indoors or out, does a child have to go to the bathroom to get some privacy, and does he get it there?

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*Merely to avoid confusion we use the masculine gender whenever we refer to an individual child.

1. Spatial Structure (Use of Space) (VARIABLES), Con't.

1.22 How does the setting change for the children during the long day? What provisions are there for more intimate family groupings at certain times (during meals, rest, story-telling, early morning, late afternoon, before lunch)?

1.23 Does each child have a cubby or shelf, and box, or folder in the room where he can put his possessions, his work?

1.24 How is "work in progress" kept safe? (Pertinent for children 4½ and up.)

1.25 Are there pictures, books, objects in the room that relate to special projects or trips (i.e., boats and books and pictures about harbor life after a trip to the harbor)? Describe.

1.26 Are there photographs visible of the children in activities?

1.27 What kinds of stories and pictures are there depicting school activities, home activities, familiar people, things and places (mothers, fathers, fire station, grocery store, transportation, doctors, dentists, etc.)?

1.28 Which books, objects, pictures in the room reflect the children's community? Do they also reflect the broad spectrum of human variety? Are there urban and rural subjects?

1.29 Comment on displays: Are they tasteful, varied but uncluttered? Are they at child's interest level? Do displays relate to activity areas (e.g., are family-living pictures displayed in the doll corner area; are there nature pictures near the science corner; are pictures of building structures near the block area)? Are there teacher-selected displays balanced with displays of the children's own work? Is children's work arranged and mounted attractively or are pictures placed in plies, in unobtrusive places, stuck on walls, as is? Are pictures at children's eye level or hung so high that only a giraffe could see them? Does the display represent a range of abilities as well as media, or does the teacher display only "the best"?

(The data collected by observing may now be used for assessment of the ISSUES stated in the beginning of this section.)

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A. PHYSICAL SETTING: 2. Materials (ISSUES)

Consider in what ways materials and equipment reflect careful thought for each child's progress in his physical, social, cognitive and affective development.

Variety of learning opportunities represented.

Meaningful selection of materials; signs of creativity and ingenuity in devising suitable materials.

Balance between materials for structured learning tasks and those for open-ended learning activities.

Prevalence of provisions for multiple channel learning in specific areas.

Appropriateness of materials in activity areas for their intended use.

Suitability to age and developmental level.

Relevancy to groups (ethnic, etc.) represented in center and to life styles of the children.

Serviceability of materials (condition and care).

Extent and nature of their use by the children.

Consideration for the long day spent in this environment, as indicated by choice and availability of materials.

***Materials that observer might introduce into the setting.

(To facilitate the evaluation of these issues, in regard to a given center, a number of VARIABLES, directly observable in the setting, are suggested by the questions on the following pages.)

A. PHYSICAL SETTING: 2. Materials (VARIABLES)

2.1 Describe the variety of materials found in this setting, their condition, attractiveness, suitability for the age group. Note the range of play experiences to which materials lend themselves, the adequacy of a given type, their ready availability to the children and their potential to engage and challenge them.

2.2 What specific materials are there in activity areas that indicate intended use of the area?

2.3 Are there enough materials for all of the children to be constructively engaged? (to play together, to allow for complexity, etc.)

2.4 Which materials are well cared for and invitingly displayed so as to stimulate curiosity and exploration? (As evidenced by the children's use of them.)

2.5 Note the materials for learning about language arts, math, science, visual arts, music, etc., also those particularly suitable for gross motor development and those for attaining small motor skills. Are those materials age appropriate, in that they challenge children but do not overly frustrate them (i.e., is it evident that children make some effort to cope with materials or are they quickly defeated because the materials make more demands on them than they can possibly cope with)?

2.6 Are there materials for structured activities (such as puzzles, counting boards, pegs, beads, dominoes, form boards, etc.) as well as materials for unstructured activities (such as paint, clay, woodworking, dramatic play, etc.)? Is there a balance or does one kind predominate? Which?

2.7 Are there opportunities for children to explore different sensory modalities (taste: sweet, salty, sour foods, etc.; auditory: musical instruments, motor sounds, rain, bells, etc.; tactile: flannel board, feeling box, smooth and rough textures, such as sandpaper, fur, velvet, varied collage materials, etc.; visual: color plaques, fingerpaint, various shapes, assorted sizes and colors, etc.: olefactory: spices, flavorings, flowers, etc.)?

2.8 Do most materials inspire children to thoughtful experimentation or do they merely lend themselves to perfunctory performance? (e.g., a large wooden dump truck versus a wind-up toy.)

2.9 Do materials motivate activity for which they are planned (e.g., do children use a rope ladder, packing boxes, indoor jungle gym for climbing or do many of them climb on tables, top of shelves)?

2. Materials (VARIABLES), Con't.

2.10 Are the children using materials with a minimum of adult assistance or is much adult help needed?

2.11 Which materials are store-bought, which are made by teachers, parents, or the children themselves?

2.12 Are there plenty of dolls, (multi-ethnic), small teddy bears and other such toys that the younger children may cuddle at any time and especially at rest and in the late hours of the day?

2.13 Does the science "table" include objects found right in the surroundings as well as objects for expanding the children's horizons (e.g., pebbles, branches, weeds, sea shells, leaves, nuts, as well as magnets, batteries and bulbs, etc.)? Are these used, ignored, gathering dust, "off-limits"? What live objects, such as animals, fish, plants are there?

2.14 What materials are there that allow children to re-experience actively in their play that which they may have seen or experienced passively (e.g., doctor sets with real stethoscopes, nurse's caps, bus driver's gear, fireman's hats, dolls to bathe and dress, etc)?

2.15 Are there puppets, props for playing grocery store and other such items that invite symbolic play and language use? Are these actually used by the children?

2.16 List materials specifically relevant to ethnic groups represented in the group of children. (i.e., books, records, pictures, etc.)

2.17 What kind of exposure is there for the children to objects used by various cultural groups, particularly those represented in the children's neighborhood?

2.18 List classroom equipment and materials that pertain to the children's home life.

2.19 Describe special "rainy day" materials?

2.20 How much flexibility is there in the arrangement of materials and furniture? (i.e., are they actually <u>moved</u> when there is a purpose for so doing?)

2.21 Which of the various materials are widely used? Are they used for what they are intended? Are theyalso used with flexibility (such as pretend cooking with play-dough or building with wooden dominoes, etc.)?

(The data collected by observing may now be used for assessment of the ISSUES stated in the beginning of this section.)

A. PHYSICAL SETTING: 3. Temporal Structure (Timing) (ISSUES)

Consider in what ways timing reflects careful thought for each child's developmental progress in all areas.

Appropriateness of time blocks for both the activities involved and the developmental level of the children.

Workable combination of predictability and flexibility in program sequencing.

Arranging of changes in temporal structure in response to unusual occurrences or special needs.

Arrangement of time as a reliable support for learning.

Structure for children's productive use of time.

Temporal structure expressive of special consideration for the long day in this environment.

***Observers suggestions for alternative temporal structure.

(To facilitate the evaluation of these issues, in regard to a given center, a number of VARIABLES, directly observable in the setting, are suggested by the questions on the following pages.)

A. PHYSICAL SETTING: 3. Temporal Structure (Timing) (VARIABLES)

3.1 Describe the temporal structure of this setting. How suitable for the age range and the long day program is the daily routine? Does the pace seem comfortable or hectic, varied or monotonous; is it arranged according to the children's states and needs or according to the clock? How does the staff handle routines and other regularly occurring sequences, such as outdoor and classroom activity periods? Is timing considered a vital, planned part of the program or is it happenstance, dictated by expediency or whim?

3.2 Is the sequence of different segments of the day's program clear and comprehensible to the observer (without having to ask)?

3.3 How do the children indicate that they know what is going to happen?

3.4 Are there certain times that some events take place each day? Are these rigidly adhered to or is there some flexibility (i.e., have a snack a little later because most children are still deeply engaged in a project, or a little earlier because children are tired after a trip, or go outdoors early because children are restless after several days of rain, or because of an impending holiday, etc.)? Describe.

3.5 If the expected temporal structure has to be changed for children because of unexpected events (a mother coming later than usual or the school bus breaking down and, therefore, being late to pick up children), does time drag for the children, increasing their anxiety, or is the time used to help the children cope with this reality? How?

3.6 How do the children indicate whether there is enough time allowed for them to finish an activity or whether the time allotted is too brief?

3.7 Must every child, (even of the same age), spend the same amount of time on the same activity?

3.8 What adjustments are made to permit the older children to engage in activities longer than the very young?

3.9 When children get restless, is there a change of pace or are they kept at activities beyond their ability to sit and concentrate on one task?

3.10 Do children move relatively smoothly from one activity to the next or is transition a time of chaos?

3. Temporal Structure (Timing) (VARIABLES), Con't.

3.11 Are activities (a project, snack, story, etc.) readily available or is the children's time wasted and their patience tried needlessly by having them wait for the next thing to happen?

3.12 Do the day's activity sequences provide some whole group, some small group, some one-to-one encounters and some family type groupings, or is there a sameness of the group composition throughout the long day?

3.13 If a time is allotted for whole group instruction does it fit the children's attention span or do they become inattentive long before the activity is terminated?

3.14 Describe how routines are carried out. It there sufficient time to engage in routines leisurely, with pleasure and a sense of growing self-confidence or are children rushed through the procedures? (e.g., are children encouraged to dress themselves or are they stuffed into their clothes; are they allowed to pull up their own pants, wash their own hands -- even if they play with the soap; do they serve themselves at mealtimes, eat leisurely and carry on conversation)?

3.15 Do most children move from one routine to the next with minimal adult direction or do they depend on the teacher to announce "what comes next".

3.16 Is time allowed for children's reflective thinking, (i.e., looking out of the window, sitting in the rocking chair with a teddy bear, listening to a record, alone or with a friend, etc.)? Give examples.

(The data collected by observing may now be used for assessment of the ISSUES stated in the beginning of this section.)

B. INTERACTIONAL SETTING (Relationships): (ISSUES)

Consider relationships with regard for the variety of learning which can only take place in an atmosphere of trust, pleasurable involvement and support for autonomy.

1. Teacher-Child

Interactions expressive of genuine warmth and concern for children as well as understanding of their developmental needs.

Predictability of teacher's behavior, frustration tolerance and adequacy of patience necessary for working with small children.

Mutuality of trust between teacher and child.

Teacher-child interaction in support of the child's acquisition of knowledge and his emerging autonomy.

Teacher's respect for children's ideas, feelings and abilities, as manifested by her interactions with them.

Teacher's insights into and tolerance for the range of age appropriate behaviors.

Acceptance of a child's state and level of functioning, with a view toward helping him to gain maturity, greater independence and self-control.

Quality of interactions appropriate for the long day in the setting and the extended time away from home.

Manifested awareness of individual differences among children.

Teacher's sensitivity to children, as expressed by her responses to their overtures; children's confident responses to teacher's approaches.

Mutuality of communication (verbal and other) between teachers and children, indicative of productive educational focus.

Adequacy of adult-to-children ratio, as reflected by the quality of interaction.

***Observer's suggestions regarding teacher-child relationships.

(To facilitate the evaluation of these Issues, in regard to a given center, a number of VARIABLES, directly observable in the setting, are suggested by the questions on the following pages.)

B. INTERACTIONAL SETTING (Relationships): 1. Teacher-Child (VARIABLES)

NOTE: Relationships are difficult to observe because they give such subtle cues. You will therefore find several questions about similar aspects of interactions. By selecting questions for your observations in turn, you will avoid being overwhelmed by this long list and will gradually know all of the questions and even add your own.

1.1 Describe the characteristics of teacher* - child relationships in this setting. Is there a sense of cohesion, stability, mutual trust or is there an overwhelmingly distant, emotionally charged or suspicious flavor to interactions? For the most part, are communications mutually respectful and confident or are they resentful, coersive and/or fearful? What is the teacher-child ratio?

1.2 How frequently does a teacher approach individual children (rarely, occasionally, throughout the day)? Certain children repeatedly or most children at some time or another? Is there some consistency about the quality of her interactions with children or does she approach, or respond to, children very differently, does this depend on her mood, the time of day, is it due to obvious favoritism or dislike of certain children?

1.3 Do children appear predominately trustful of the teacher or do they seem apprehensive, sullen or "frozen" when contacted by her?

1.4 How specific and personalized is interaction? (Are children addressed mostly as "children," "boys and girls," or mostly by each child's name?) Is main purpose of interaction to respond to child's request, to maintain control, to help the child become involved in teacher-directed activity, to help the child become involved in self-selected activity, to comfort, scold, redirect, praise, give recognition, or approval? Is there clearly a "main purpose" of interaction? Do interactions serve many ends that are clearly observable? (Which?)

1.5 Do teacher-child interactions frequently bring the intended results, or do they usually lead to conflict, change nothing, cause withdrawal or expressed anger on the part of the child?

1.6 How does the teacher show her tolerance of child-like demands, of their impatience, mood swings, self-assertion, negativism, occasional impulsivity, exuberance, bragging, angry feelings, tears, occasional testing behavior? How does she guide the children at such times toward adequate coping and socially acceptable behavior?

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*"Teacher" refers to all people with whom children interact at the center, since everyone in contact with them may have an educational impact. Also, to avoid awkward duplication of pronouns (i.e., "he-she"), we will use feminine gender for teachers throughout the guide. No offence intended to male teachers; on the contrary, we acknowledge with pleasure the increasing numbers of men in day care work.

1. Teacher-Child (VARIABLES) Con't.

1.7 Can she be observed to show a range of honest feelings without losing control of herself or the situation, and without arousing the children's hostility.

1.8 Is there or is there not consistency between what the teacher says and how she behaves (e.g., teacher yelling across the room, "don't you shout at me")?

1.9 Note teacher's facial expression as she talks and reads to children or engages them in learning projects. (animated, impassive, "bored to tears", angry?)

1.10 Does the teacher sound natural when interacting with children or is her voice artificial and quite different from conversing with observer?

1.11 Does she time her approaches to children so that she does not interfere with but rather enhances their activities (e.g., does she interrupt a child's pasting efforts by asking what he is doing, or does she wait until he is finished or is in need of encouragement)?

1.12 Are questions raised with children that communicate a real interest in learning? (e.g., "I wonder what will happen to the snow if we put it on the radiator.")?

1.13 Are the teacher's questions open-ended, thought inducing questions or are they close-ended, i.e., there is only one right answer? (In other words, are most questions designed to get the children to think or are they designed merely to get the children to reproduce definite facts?) Give several examples.

1.14 Does she listen carefully and patiently to what children tell her (verbally and via gestures); how does she signal her interest in their communications?

1.15 Does the teacher seem to make an effort to have back and forth encounters with children, or are contacts chiefly one-sided (i.e., do both listen and talk to each other or does teacher give directions and then turn away; does child make demands and teacher ignores, or does teacher tell child something and child withdraws, etc.)? Describe.

1. Teacher-Child (VARIABLES) Con't.

1.16 Are teacher-child interactions scattered, i.e., does teacher unpredictably change the subject, walk away, leave child "hanging," or do they terminate with child engaging in or returning to, meaningful learning activity? Give examples.

1.17 Describe the content of the teacher-child interaction--does it give evidence that the teacher knows what interests the children, what worries or confuses them?

1.18 Is teacher's response usually in terms of child's stated or implied request or is there often a mismatch (e.g., if child is seeking comfort, does teacher offer information instead)?

1.19 Can she share the pleasure and excitement a child may express about some discovery or newly learned fact in an honest (not phony) way?

1.20 How does a teacher encourage a child to think and act for himself and at the same time remain comfortably dependent in ways appropriate for his optimal development?

1.21 Does the teacher give evidence of accepting individual differences or does she let the children know that she favors certain ways of being and acting? (Does she appreciate the child who works slowly as much as the one who is always quickly done with the task; can she accept the child who does not enjoy music as much as the one who likes to sing the songs she teaches?)

1.22 Note when the teacher lets the children know that she values them and that she has confidence in their ability to learn. In what ways does she support their self-confidence? (e.g., by encouraging them to try, by praising their efforts, by lending a hand before they are overwhelmed with frustration?) Are teachers heard making adverse comments about children or about their families in the children's presence?

1.23 What efforts does she make to reach quiet, withdrawn children?

1.24 Are children who reach out for affection responded to in words as well as in action?

1.25 What opportunities are there for a teacher and a child to sit on a rocking chair together, for a tired, sad or lonely child to sit on a teacher's lap, for a child to be sung to or told a story about himself ("when you were a baby...", etc.)?

1.26 Does the teacher demonstrate her empathy by sympathizing with the child? Does she inquire what made the child feel the way he does?

1. Teacher-Child (VARIABLES) Con't.

1.27 Are relationships fostered between the so-called "non-teaching" staff and the children?

1.28 When a child becomes ill, is he isolated or is there an adult available for companionship and comfort?

1.29 Are limits explained or does the teacher "lay down the law"?

1.30 Is there recognition of efforts at self-control, be they ever so fleeting, or is undesirable behavior the focus of teacher's comment?

1.31 When a child has lost control, can she accept the child's angry or upset feelings and help him toward regaining control or does she retaliate? (Does she threaten, condemn, humiliate or shame the child, moralize or lecture to him or does she offer alternatives, i.e., offer acceptable modes of behavior for him)? Does she encourage the child to talk about the situation or does she do all the talking? Is she aligning herself with the child to help him gain self-control or is she fighting the child; does she tear him down or build him up (e.g., "it's hard to learn to wait for your turn" versus "you are a bad boy again, always grabbing for toys".)

1.32 Note the ways in which teacher's interactions include recognition of the long day away from home? (responding to some children's need for occasional closeness, providing one-to-one interchanges, special caretaking, a conversation about home and family, etc.?) Is there evidence that teachers and children share in some housekeeping task? (shop, cook together, care together for younger child, animal, plants, etc.)

1.33 In what specific ways do teacher-child interactions become more intimate, more supportive, during early morning and late afternoon hours, during meal and nap time? (Does she provide a bit of "mothering" without this becoming highly emotional?)

1.34 How does teacher share with children (without imposing her point of view on them) something about her own cultural life? For example, the way she celebrates holidays, prepares particular foods, etc.? How does she show her respect when children talk about home experiences or when their interests reflect home life styles, possibly different from her own? (e.g., bring in records their family likes or perhaps talk about the family custom of children staying up with the adults and all going to bed at the same time?)

1.35 Are cultural and ethnic differences recognized and appreciated or does teacher express judgment about one ethnic group in favor of another? Do they treat minority children in a way

conspicuously different from other children? Do they avoid any mention of differences, even when children themselves show this awareness? Document, with several examples.

1.36 Are parents seen interacting with children in the classroom?

1.37 Are neighborhood grandmotherly or grandfatherly people used to help nurture children? Are there older children, high school volunteers?

(The data collected by observing may now be used for assessment of the ISSUES stated in the beginning of this section.)

B. INTERACTIONAL SETTING (Relationships): 2. Child-Child (ISSUES)

Provision of social encounters with children of the same age range and with similar interests.

Broadening range of social experiences through opportunities to interact with children of different ages and from a variety of backgrounds.

Special consideration for maintaining a sense of family through regular interaction amoung siblings within (and visiting) the center.

Dominance of positive interactions among children, with both tolerance and control in the expression of feelings.

Regular occurrance of group experiences, as a means of increasing children's ability to find expression for their interests, ideas and needs.

Fostered awareness of each other, resulting in relaxed familiarity and pleasure in shared experiences.

Prevalence of spontaneous collaboration in learning activities.

Encouragement for children to demonstrate and talk about new ideas and skills, thus facilitating their learning from each other.

Heightened sensitivity to and appreciation of the ideas and abilities of others, based on (and contributing to) self-understanding and clarity in the communication of intentions.

Promotion of healthy social and racial attitudes.

Attentiveness to developing varied forms of effective communication among children.

Support for children's positive resolution of conflicts, with increasing ability of children to use alternatives to familiar patterns.

Growing awareness by children of the consequences of their behavior as a means of becoming socially responsible.

Efforts toward success in self-regulation of pleasurable as well as troubled interactions among children.

Signs of generosity and empathy among children; growing ability to understand, assist and give to each other.

***Observer's suggestions regarding child-child relationships.

(To facilitate the evaluation of these Issues, in regard to a given center, a number of VARIABLES, directly observable in the setting, are suggested by the questions on the following pages.)

B. INTERACTIONAL SETTING (Relationships): . 2. Child-Child (VARIABLES)

2.1 Describe the opportunities for meaningful interactions among children in this setting. Are groups kept reasonably intimate so children can get to know and enjoy each other or are they so large that children are overwhelmed by the crowd, the noise and commotion? Note the importance assigned to sociality in this program; Are interactions fostered, are children shushed or in other ways discouraged from relating, or are they left to their own devices?

2.2 What kinds of overtures do the children make to each other? How are these responded to? Can give-and-take encounters be observed frequently? Is there conversation between children?

2.3 Do children tell each other about their experiences or demonstrate to each other a newly learned skill?

2.4 How frequently do children offer help and cooperation to other children spontaneously? Do they share their work with each other?

2.5 Describe a collaborate effort among children. (e.g., a block building or dramatic play sequence, etc.)

2.6 Will many 4 to 6 year olds share and take turns spontaneously? Do children share and care for a toy that belongs to a particular child?

2.7 In what manner do children communicate feelings to each other? (Do many of them show friendliness and warmth toward other children, at least some of the time or are words and actions predominantly aggressive?)

2.8 Are children encouraged to think of ways to be helpful to each other. ("Billy is so unhappy this morning, what could we do to make him feel better?") Are they encouraged to identify the way a child feels? ("Susan feels as badly about her block building tumbling down as you did the other day when you couldn't get the puzzle put together.") Does the teacher prevent the children feeling empathetic by moralizing (i.e., heightening resentment toward one another, "How would you like it if Billy hit you?")

2.9 Are communications that are clearly hurtful (e.g. racist epitaphs) evident among the children; how are they handled?

2.10 Are friendships fostered or interfered with, enmities helped to resolve or are they manipulated by separation or decree?

2.11 Within reason, are children permitted to settle conflicts in the way they are handled in their community? Are children learning to use alternative methods as well?

2. Child-Child (VARIABLES) Con't.

2.12 Are most children over 4 able to handle minor conflicts without resorting to physical attack?

2.13 Is a physical fight permitted occasionally, if children are well matched and able to handle themselves? (Is it forbidden, promoted?)

2.14 What opportunities are there during the day for children to interact with other children of differenct ages, particularly with their own siblings attending the center?

2.15 How frequently are older and younger siblings invited to the center; are children encouraged to interact with them freely?

2.16 Is there opportunity for children to interact with children from a variety of backgrounds embracing different life styles? Is interest in and respect for differences manifested by introducing different foods, stories, holiday celebrations, music, attire, etc.? Are children encouraged to explore both differences and commonalities? Give evidence.

(The data collected by observing may now be used for assessment of the ISSUES stated in the beginning of this section.)

B. INTERACTIONAL SETTING (Relationships): 3. Staff (ISSUES)

Functioning of entire center staff as an integral component of the total learning environment.

Mutuality of trust, respect and support among the staff.

Regular and purposeful staff communications.

Differentiated staffing patterns, considering professional competency and specific areas of personal effectiveness.

Joint planning, evaluation and decision making, in the service of program implementation.

Staff acceptance of a teacher's autonomy, as expressed by professionally sound decisions and actions.

Prevalence of pleasure in working together; resolution of disagreements or of tension.

Consistency of staff cooperation; supportiveness in times of crisis.

Responsibility taken by each staff member to assure smooth functioning of the center.

***Observer's suggestions regarding staff interactions.

(To facilitate the evaluation of these Issues, in regard to a given center, a number of VARIABLES, directly observable in the setting, are suggested by the questions on the following pages.)

B. INTERACTIONAL SETTING (Relationships): 3. Staff (VARIABLES)

3.1 Describe staff interactions. Is there evidence that the staffmembers (professional and auxiliary, classroom and other) plan and work together to assure learning for the children? Are working conditions conducive to a pleasant cooperative spirit or are demands so high and rewards so low as to be debilitating? What are the mechanisms for staff support and consultation?

3.2 Is there communication among staff, both formal and informal? Are there regular meetings, conferences; is there joint planning for and evaluation of day, the week, the use of space, etc.*

3.3 How are decisions made concerning implementation of program? Does one person (director, head teacher) make decisions? Can it be observed that the decision maker solicits the opinions and preferences of the staff? Are decisions derived at by a group working together or do assistant teachers merely "follow orders"?

3.4 Is there a staff training component at the center? Is there a career ladder for auxiliary personnel?*

3.5 In a given room, can the staff be observed to be working cooperatively or at cross purposes?

3.6 Does each teacher work in her own way with children while maintaining contact with others or does each person do "her own thing" in isolation from the other staff?

3.7 Does most of the staff give the impression that they enjoy working together or is there evidence of tension?

3.8 What is the evidence that staff members have varied responsibilities for the program? (Is everybody doing exactly the same thing? Can division of responsibilities be observed during particular segments of the program;i.e., routines, activities, etc.?) Do all adults in a room share in housekeeping as well as teaching tasks or is the "dirty work" always relegated to the same people?

3.9 What special talents of staff members are utilized in the program?

3.10 In what ways is it apparent various levels of professional competency are used appropriately (e.g., skilled rather than inexperienced teacher handles child in tantrum)?

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*May be ascertained by means other than observation.

3. Staff (VARIABLES) Con't.

3.11 Do individual staff members give evidence of being responsible for particular children?

3.12 What evidence is there that staff supports a teacher who finds herself in a crisis situation (i.e., by direct assistance, or by offering willingness to help in whatever way the teacher deems useful)?

3.13 Is there visual or verbal communication throughout the day? Do the adults act upon this communication?

3.14 Do communications pertain to the children's program (to facilitate learning) or do they concern issues irrelevant to the classroom situation?

3.15 Do staff members talk about successful teaching experiences so children can witness adults learning from one another or does staff communication occur at the expense of the children (i.e., ignoring them, talking over their heads, etc.)?

3.16 How do adults resolve differences? (amiably, begrudgingly, not at all)

3.17 Can teachers be observed discussing different ideas in a friendly kind of sharing or do they give evidence of competing with each other, each bent on having his own way? Can staff be seen to try something new with the blessing (rather than harrassment) of their peers?

3.18 Are staff patterns arranged so that each person has regular times away from the children during the day?

3.19 Do teachers sometimes rotate among classes for special activities as a means of introducing a change of pace for children and for teachers as well as offering expertise in certain subjects?

(The data collected by observing may now be used for assessment of the ISSUES stated in the beginning of this section.)

B. INTERACTIONAL SETTING (Relationships): 4. Teacher-Parent (ISSUES)

Mutuality of trust and respect between teachers and parents, as demonstrated by their interactions.

Encouragement and, to the degree feasible, incorporation of, parents' ideas and suggestions for the center's operation.

Nature and extent of active parent involvement in the center; its effect on parents' interest in the program, on teacher-parent relationships and on the program itself.

Level of collaboration between teachers and parents, in general to increase educational effectiveness of the center and specifically, to prevent divided loyalty within the child, mitigating against his learning.

Effectiveness of communication between staff and parents, through informal and formalized channels.

Availability of useful information for parents concerning center's procedures and their children's specific learning experiences.

Prevalence in the center of relationships that promote parents and teachers sharing in significant events in child's life.

Teachers' insights into and respect for child-rearing practices of the homes, as indicated by their attitudes and procedures.

Prevalence of parents feeling comfortable with teacher and confident that center is a good place for their child.

***Observer's suggestions regarding teacher-parent interactions.

(To facilitate the evaluation of these Issues, in regard to a given center, a number of VARIABLES, directly observable in the setting, are suggested by the questions on the following pages.)

B. INTERACTIONAL SETTING (Relationships): 4. Parent-Teacher (VARIABLES)

4.1 Describe the relationship between the parents of children attending the center and the staff. In what aspects of the center's operation are parents actively involved? Note the quality of daily contacts between parents and teachers, also on special occasions (e.g., when a child is ill or has separation difficulties).

4.2 How many parents are involved in the instructional or care-taking aspects of the program?

4.3 What are the procedures to ensure that parents have a voice in making some decisions in the running of the center?*

4.4 Are parents seen visiting classrooms? Are visits encouraged, spontaneous visits welcome?

4.5 Do teachers keep parents informed about the program? Is there evidence of written and oral communications to parents?* Is the daily schedule posted? Is there evidence of information about pending trips, class visits, etc.? Are reasons for classroom procedures shared with parents?

4.6 How do teachers respond to parents' questions and comments? (Is there a back-and-forth sharing about the child and the program or does the teacher make pronouncements? Is the tone of the interaction respectful or authoritarian, concerned or detached, warm or abrupt, genuine or saccarine?)

4.7 What is the plan for regular conferences between teachers and parents? Are the children's progress, accomplishments, difficulties at the center discussed with parents? Do parents discuss with teachers <u>their</u> concerns about their child's development? (Cite evidence that teachers know about, and have respect for, the child-rearing practices of the homes)*

4.8 What is the parent program? (Are regular meetings held at a time convenient to the parents? How is program determined? What kind of responses are there to the program?)*

4.9 Is there evidence that parents' suggestions and ideas are welcome and are included in program activities?*

4.10 What kinds of informal sharing of information about the child's experiences at the center and at home are there between parents and teachers?

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*May be ascertained by means other than observation.

4. Parent-Teacher (VARIABLES) Con't.

4.11 What is done to stimulate parents' interest in the program when they bring and pick-up children?

4.12 In what ways do teachers demonstrate their educational methods by their own behavior with the children in the presence of parents (e.g., listening attentively to a child and responding--rather than interrupting the child to talk to the adult)? Do they share with parents verbally some of their own successful procedures, with appropriate explanations (e.g., mother is drilling the child on numbers; teacher relates that she has children counting cups and napkins at mealtimes, etc.)?

4.13 What examples are there of relating home activities to school activities?

(The data collected by observing may now be used for assessment of the ISSUES stated in the beginning of this section.)

C. PROGRAM: (ISSUES)

Consider in what ways the program helps children increase their understanding of self, other people and the world around them, and to be able to act upon this understanding.

1. Curriculum Content

Logical fit of program components with overall educational goals.

Responsiveness of curriculum to the children's needs, interests, capacities and learning styles; appropriateness of program to developmental levels.

Match between subject matter, children's previous learning and their active interests, to assure activities that are personally meaningful to children and serve as basis for them to organize and integrate new information.

Enhancement of children's self-awareness, self-esteem and self-confidence throughout the curriculum.

Children's pleasure and involvement in learning; motivations, inherent in program, for active inquiry.

Range of stimulating learning activities that foster concentrated involvement, discovery, skill mastery and a sense of achievement.

Program components geared to aid problem solving, concept formation, symbolic representation and understanding of causal relationships.

Rich and varied approaches to language development. Multiple opportunities for communication, in a manner appropriate for young children. (Dramatic play, art, etc., as well as language.)

Curriculum components increasing the children's responsiveness to and discovery of the world around them.

Inclusion of program segments to enhance the children's relationship with and understanding of their community.

Program features specifically designed in view of children's experiential backgrounds, the long day they spend in the same environment and away from home.

Balance between indoor and outdoor activities, gross motor and fine motor play, sequences of active manipulation and reflective periods, between structured and creative problem-solving tasks and between individual and group learning experiences. (Age appropriate mix, with individually determined variants.)

1. Curriculum Content (ISSUES) Con't.

Validity of center routines as learning experiences beyond their care-taking functions.

Consideration for children's increasing capabilities, as expressed by modifications in curriculum content.

***Curriculum experiences that observer might introduce into the program.

(To facilitate the evaluation of these Issues, in regard to a given center, a number of VARIABLES, directly observable in the setting, are suggested by the questions on the following pages.)

C. PROGRAM: 1. Curriculum Content (VARIABLES)

NOTE: Some people seem to think that "curriculum content" is the most important category in day care. In fact, it is neither more nor less important than the other categories in determining the quality of a learning environment for young children. However, because of different community priorities and different ways in which teachers translate educational goals into the curriculum, these questions are wide-ranging and suggestive of others that the observer may wish to pose for himself in a given setting.

1.1 Describe the main features of the curriculum in this setting; what educational philosophy seems to be expressed, what goals actively pursued? Look for specific age-level as well as specific "long day" features of the curriculum. Note kinds of activities in evidence a great deal, occasionally, not at all. (Are there some activities especially promoted or discouraged in this setting?) What inputs are there for curriculum planning (i.e., inservice training, meetings, visiting other centers, reading, educational consultants)?*

1.2 How does the teacher plan for the program and evaluate its impact on the children (short and long term)?*

1.3 Is there a reasonable balance between active and sedentary program components, between those requiring action, those allowing for reflection, between physical movement and small motor tasks?

1.4 Which of the subjects, such as language arts, math, science, music, etc., are ongoing parts of the program; which are limited to definite periods, which cannot be observed at all?

1.5 Describe a) a waterplay sequence, b) a cooking project, c) a discussion guided by the teacher and d) a music period. (What learning is going on? Which educational goals are being met?)

1.6 Are there mostly whole-group structured work periods or do smaller groups form according to the children's interest in specific learning areas? (Is there a balance between the two or does only one or the other exist? Can children be found working individually as well?)

1.7 How do teachers select activities for children? (Because they relate to children's observable interests, questions, preoccupations or are they selected according to the teacher's own interests, a manual, something that "worked" the year before, etc.?)*

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*May be ascertained by means other than observation.

1. Curriculum Content (VARIABLES) Con't.

1.8 Does there seem to be a logical sequence to the various curriculum segments, or does the curriculum consist of haphazard successions of things to do (i.e., is a logical sequence clear to observer or do different "projects" appear disjointed)?

1.9 How much and what kind of television watching is permitted and/or encouraged at the center?

1.10 Which of the program components build self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence on the part of the children (are mirrors used, are books made with children, entitled "things I have learned to do, etc," are there photographs of children, height and weight measurements, do children care for pets, for younger children, dictate stories about themselves, perform short chores, move freely to music, etc.)?

1.11 Describe the modes and levels of symbolic play the children engage in. Note the variety of dramatic and creative expressions that are an ongoing part of the curriculum. What are some of the means used through which the children represent their ideas, experiences and concerns? (e.g., blocks, woodwork, painting, dance, symbolic play, dictation of stories and poems, etc.)

1.12 Does the curriculum deal with subject matter built upon previous home learnings and the children's active interests or does most subject matter refer to concepts clearly unfamiliar and strange to the children (of relevance to much older children or to children from a different community)?

1.13 Give examples of the match between program goals and various age levels. (e.g., is the process of exploration by 2 year olds emphasized over end product; are 3 year olds permitted to manipulate and structure objects rather than subjected to long verbal explanations; are 4 year olds encouraged to verbalize ideas in addition to manipulating objects; do 5 year olds become involved in planning for and carrying through sequential steps of their projects?)

1.14 Which activities are introduced by the teacher that are clearly designed for specific needs of some children (e.g., a box of buttons to sort by color for children with difficulties with color discrimination)?

1.15 How is expressive language encouraged? (e.g., games, casual conversation, stories? are there several small story groups, are children read to individually or are there only whole group story times?) In what way does story reading (or telling) stimulate language use? Do children hear rich and varied verbalizations? (Give examples) Are these understood

by the children? Are feelings and ideas talked about as readily as concrete facts and skills to be mastered? Give evidence.

1.16 Note flexibility versus rigidity of specific elements of the program. (e.g., does teacher continue her story about Easter eggs in view of the fact that the children have just discovered that it is snowing outside; does she shift gears if children become disinterested, restless?)

1.17 List the opportunities children have in this setting to explore. Are children encouraged to actively seek information or are demonstration and verbal information by the teacher commonly substituted for discovery?

1.18 Describe program procedures which encourage children to make choices and to try various alternatives?

1.19 Do many children handle concrete objects with focused attention and sustained involvement or do they tend to merely finger objects aimlessly, flitting from one to another? How frequently do children embrace activities with enthusiasm and become involved to the point of completing something?

1.20 Is information given to children in relation to ongoing activity or only at special times set aside for this purpose?

1.21 In what ways are cause and effect relationships demonstrated and talked about?

1.22 What relationship is there between projects observed and the children's spontaneous play, (i.e., do children use in their play newly learned concepts and skills)?

1.23 Are children encouraged to use the whole range of play options (i.e., girls play with trucks, do woodworking; boys play house, take mother role, etc.) or is sex-stereotyped activity promoted?

1.24 Is emphasis on the learning process or chiefly on finished products? (e.g., learning about pasting by piling papers on top of each other with gobs of paste or producing neat, well ordered pictures)?

1. Curriculum Content (VARIABLES) Con't.

1.25 Are all children expected to be doing something all the time? (Does the program permit observing, roaming, withdrawing, etc.?) Are many children roaming or passively watching much of the time or only certain children?

1.26 Note mealtime procedures: Are meals taken in intimate family setting in the child's own classroom or in large common rooms? Do teachers sit and eat with children? Are mealtimes relaxed, is there conversation? Are children allowed to help themselves? Note evidence that meals include foods that children particularly enjoy.

1.27 At rest time, how do teachers create a relaxed and reassuring atmosphere? What provisions are there for the children who do not sleep?

1.28 Note bathroom routines: Is self-care unhurried and pleasurable? Are routines rigidly enforced? Do children all go to the bathroom at the same time? Do they learn concepts about the items they use, such as the difference between hot and cold water, the slipperiness of soap?

1.29 What kinds of responsibilities are children helped to take? (e.g., setting the table, passing food, watering plants, feeding the animals.) Which jobs do the children seem to enjoy?

1.30 Does the day care curriculum include features of a family-like environment for the children? What specific inputs make it different from a short day program? (e.g., does the program include opportunities for the kind of family groupings and activities a child might enjoy at home; is it like a "typical nursery school", only stretched over twice as many hours? Describe special activities for long days spent indoors during bad weather. (activity for physical release as well as for new challenges and offerings; change in materials from those used earlier in the day, etc.)

1.31 Do people from the community visit the center and share with the children information about their work? Describe.

1.32 What kinds of field trips are children taken on? What is the purpose of a given trip? How do trips relate to the children's interests and scope of experiences? Do most trips permit repeated exposure or are they frequently "one-shot deals"? In what way do trips help children know their own community?

1.33 In observations over the year: describe how children are advancing in their effective handling of materials, in skills,

1. Curriculum Content (VARIABLES) Con't.

in length of attention span, in verbal expressiveness, increased curiosity, greater frustration tolerance and patience? Are more children completing tasks as the year advances, or are less children doing this? Are more children showing curiosity and a desire to explore? Note if more children act in a purposeful rather than in an aimless manner. Are most children engaging in more complex activities or are they doing pretty much the same thing they had been doing earlier (i.e., building the same way, or drawing the same kind of things, looking at the same book, etc.)? Over time do children become more quickly and more deeply involved in self-selected learning activities?

(The data collected by observing may now be used for assessment of the ISSUES stated in the beginning of this section.)

C. PROGRAM: 2. Teaching Strategies (ISSUES)

Appropriateness of teaching procedures for the age and developmental level of the children.

Affective supports for development of cognitive competence along a broad continuum.

Consistent encouragement of exploration, clarification, extension and integration of learnings.

Consideration for different learning styles, experiential backgrounds and differences in pace among children, as evidenced by flexibility and "tuned in" quality of teacher guidance.

Heightening the child's ability to represent symbolically, through play and language, his experiences, ideas and feelings--enlarging his repertoire of information, communication and skill mastery.

Facilitation of increasing range of alternatives in expressing ideas, attitudes, feelings.

Sensitivity and appropriateness of teachers' responses to children. Their acceptance and validation of working proscesses, per se, as legitimate outcome of learning activities.

Clarity of purpose and management of "ground rules".

Prevalence of satisfying interactions, as a basis for self-regulated responsible social behavior; prevalence of successful learning encounters, as a basis for self-regulated, confident involvement in work.

***Observer's suggestions regarding teaching strategies.

(To facilitate the evaluation of these Issues, in regard to a given center, a number of VARIABLES, directly observable in the setting, are suggested by the questions on the following pages.

C. PROGRAM: 2. Teaching Strategies (VARIABLES)

Note: Teaching strategy, as we use the term, encompasses thoughtful consideration of many possible approaches, with the selection, at a given time, of the most enabling for the child and appropriate for the content of the learning experience. It is not merely a collection of available "methods". The observer should keep in mind that teacher strategies may be subtle and that they cannot be judged by the children's immediate responses, since learning involves processes of modification rather than instant changes. The following questions may serve to guide observations of teaching strategies and to assess them in terms of the issues.

2.1 Describe teaching strategies most apparent in this setting. Note the match between: a. teaching strategies and competent functioning by the children and b. teaching methods and developmental needs of a given group. In what ways does the teacher's guidance assure the kinds of feelings and attitudes that permit the children's concentration on the learning at hand?

2.2 Are most activities initiated by children or by teachers? Is there a balance of both?

2.3 In which concrete ways do teachers pick up on the children's experiences, interests, preoccupations, ideas and questions (as stated directly or as manifested through play)? What new input is added to expand knowledge and clarify misunderstandings? (e.g., teacher notices child's fascination with ray of sun in the room, gets prism, colored sheets of plastic, flashlight, etc. Or child indicated he believes mailman lives in mailbox; teacher arranges visit to the center by neighborhood mailman, followed by child mailing a letter, watching box being emptied, a trip to the post office, introduction of mailman "gear" into dramatic play area.)

2.4 Does the teacher include information relating to arithmetic, reading, science, etc., at times appropriate to ongoing activities or does she relegate learning about objects to specified times of the day? Can teachers be observed helping children with concepts, attributes of objects, etc., by focusing on these with the child (noticing shape differences, colors, using numbers, etc.) as an ongoing feature of her teaching? Give specific examples.

2.5 Are children encouraged to observe and actually care for animals and plants? What kind of related information does the teacher provide?

2. Teaching Strategies (VARIABLES) Con't.

2.6 To what sort of physical phenomena does the teacher alert children? (e.g., a change in light during the long day, characteristics of the seasons, etc.) What about occasional walks in the rain or snow? (i.e., get to know about the weather rather than talking about it in the abstract, indoors.)

2.7 Describe the way a teacher presents materials and ideas. (Does she spark the children's curiosity and interest?) Does the teacher facilitate or dictate activity (does she distribute materials and let the children "go to town" or is the use of materials prescribed by her)? Are activities usually introduced by getting the children involved in the task itself, adding information as project is proceeding or are there long verbal introductions by the teacher while children sit empty handed?

2.8 Note in what ways teachers are attentive to children outdoors beyond guarding them against physical injury? (i.e., are children guided into a balance of experiences or are children left strictly to their own devices, such as a child spending all the time on a swing)?

2.9 How does a teacher help children sustain their involvement in their work? (by showing her interest in what they are doing, without telling them "how to" play? By what other means?) And how does a teacher help a child feel good about his work? (Can it be observed that the teacher points out progress to a child and enjoys it with him?) What assistance and encouragement is there for children who do not succeed or who make mistakes in a task? (Does the observed teaching technique help children persist and meet with success? Conversely, does a teacher prevent success by shaming, ridiculing or humiliating children?)

2.10 Does the teacher give recognition to the child's work in terms of the child's goals or her goals? Is recognition specific ("your picture has a lot of blue and red going round and round") or very general, non-specific ("very nice... beautiful....good job") Is a child's effort acknowledged, even if his task is incomplete (e.g., writing one or two letters but not his whole name; inserting a few puzzle pieces correctly, but not all of them, etc.)?

2.11 Do the children frequently experience success in their activities?

2.12 Are children allowed to complete what they are involved in or must children stop at the same moment to do something else? What happens to those children who are "finished" while most of the others are still involved? How are children helped to move on when persevering in a task?

2. Teaching Strategies (VARIABLES) Con't.

2.13 Does the teacher guide different children toward different activities for specific reasons (e.g., hammering for a restless child, table game for a timid, inhibited child on a certain day)?

2.14 How does the teacher encourage children to try out various materials in different ways? (e.g., use water to discover what things float and sink; as a release potential; to measure; to mix with other substances; to heat; freeze, etc.)

2.15 Does the teacher show the children various ways of getting results or does she explain a procedure in one way only?

2.16 On what issues does the teacher let children make decisions for themselves (e.g., whether or not to join storytime, what colors to use, how to play a game, who to sit next to, etc.) and on what issues does she make decisions?

2.17 Are the intentions of the teacher sufficiently clear so that the observer can know without asking what the teacher has in mind and the kids also seem to know?

2.18 Which activities do teachers provide for children that they can do by themselves without teacher help and/or instruction? Are children often kept passively waiting for assistance?

2.19 What evidence is there that teachers observe the children's activities, including symbolic play for diagnosis of children's needs, anxieties, interests and capacities?

2.20 In what specific ways does the teacher validate ethnic and cultural features of various backgrounds? (e.g., does she include stories, pictures, special visits, holidays, foods, etc. to support this?)

2.21 Are children given time and permission to explore (within reason) the properties of materials in their own way? (e.g., knock their buildings down, look at a book upside down, put a jacket on backwards, roll pegs across the table instead of inserting them in pegboards, etc.)

2.22 How do teachers encourage children to tell about their experiences? (Do they write down the children's stories? Use a tape recorder? Help children make scrap books with pictures, stories? Encourage them to engage in dramatic play, to paint, use clay, etc.?)

2.23 Are questions asked by a teacher usually open-ended or does the teacher mostly ask questions to which there is only one right answer?

2. Teaching Strategies (VARIABLES) Con't.

2.24 Do teachers have back and forth conversation with children or does teacher dominate conversation.

2.25 Give evidence of the teacher helping children express in words what they wish to do, or what they think and feel. Is it clear from the teacher's response that she has listened attentively to the children?

2.26 Give examples of teachers expanding the children's verbalizations (making a whole sentence out of the child's phrase without "correcting" the child's own verbalizations). Do they give words to a child's vague expressions or non-verbal communications? Do they persist in their efforts to understand what a child is trying to say?

2.27 Does the teacher ever talk about the relationships between activities that the child is engaged in and the real world?

2.28 When a project is finished, do children show by action or words that they know what happens next (are children helped to organize sequences by clear indication on the part of the teacher, in words or via her actions, such as putting out books or bringing the phonograph over, etc.)? Or do things just "dissolve" (as evidenced by aimless running, general restlessness, angry outbursts)? Do most children move <u>independently</u> to the next activity or do many of the children wait for teachers to <u>determine</u> their activities?

2.29 Does the teacher give children time to get used to changes in program or does teacher make abrupt changes, (i.e., "pretty soon it will be time to put toys away and get ready for music" vs. "clean up now, it's music time")?

2.30 When the teacher directs children does she tell them what comes next (e.g., "now we put toys away so we can get ready for snack" or "put your coats on so that you will be warm out on the playground") or are directions usually given in the form of orders ("clean up, get dressed")?

2.31 Does the teacher habitually use a positive approach (e.g., "blocks are for building"; "let's find you some paper to paint on") or are her directives frequently negative (e.g., don't throw that block"; "if you paint on the table again, I won't let you paint any more")?

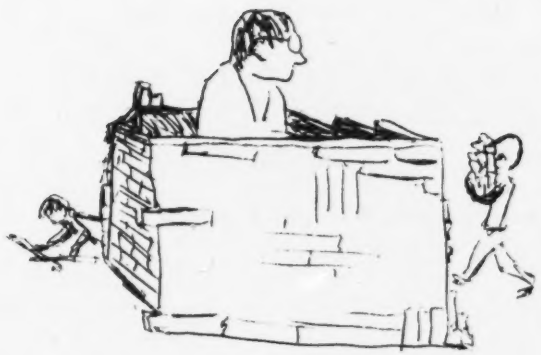
2.32 What behavior do teachers reward and what is definitely discouraged in children? (List, with at least 3 examples for each.)

2. Teaching Strategies (VARIABLES) Con't.

2.33 In what ways does the teacher encourage or discourage the children to play and talk freely? What kinds of self-expression are permitted or discouraged? (e.g., forms of self-assertion, negativism, clinging, attention seeking, etc.)

2.34 Does the teacher permit a reasonable amount of noise and other child-like behavior (including some flareups of enthusiasm, giggles, aggression) as long as it is not hurtful to others?

2.35 Describe methods for enforcing ground rules (e.g., does the teacher remind the children what the rules are, such as, "we run outdoors, not in the room" or "we stay at the tables as long as we are eating," etc., does she merely show disapproval at infractions against rules, such as "you're a bad boy")? Is she firm when the situation demands it, following through until the matter is concluded or does she make pronouncements, without follow through (e.g., tells child not to climb on table, walks away, turns around and tells him again, ignores the fact that he still hasn't come down, rather than reminding the child that the jungle gym is for climbing and taking him over there)?



2.36 Do teachers stay calm and friendly even when they must be firm as to prevent an injury or injustice or can teachers be observed to have uncontrolled outbursts of anger?

2.37 When a child is clearly upset, is he comforted, ignored, scolded? Does the teacher try to get children to talk about feelings or troubles? or does she lecture on proper behavior? Do several adults descend on one misbehaving or upset child, either at the same time or in rapid succession within a brief time span, like 15 minutes? Describe in detail.

2.38 If a child disrupts a project, does the teacher focus on possible reasons and ways to help the situation or does she concentrate on the disruption?

2. Teaching Strategies (VARIABLES) Con't.

2.39 How are conflicts among children usually resolved; describe the strategies used. (e.g., does teacher stand by and watch before stepping in or does she rush to settle conflicts? Are children asked to find solutions or are solutions imposed? ("Both of you want to ride this bike, what do you think we should do?", versus "Alright, don't fight, you get it now, you (other child) later." Is scolding, or are threats, used to stop conflicts? Is the source of conflict arbitrarily removed? Can it be observed that the teacher ignores some minor squabbles or misbehavior she is clearly aware of or is she constantly "after the kids"?

2.40 What limits are in relation to children's welfare, which appear set more for the convenience of the adult? What reasons are given to help children understand the limits set for them?

2.41 How does the teacher comfort and reassure children who are reluctant to separate from their mothers or who ask frequently (in words or by their behavior) about mother during the day?

2.42 In what ways does the teacher allow children to "feel at home," at the center (e.g., curl up on the floor with a book or doll, sit on her lap, have a good fight with a friend, demand to get a cookie or raisin) particularly in the late afternoon?

2.43 Describe in detail how the teacher's behavior might serve as a model for her expectations of the children?

(The data collected by observing may now be used for assessment of the ISSUES stated in the beginning of this section.)

C. PROGRAM: 3. Socio-Emotional Climate (ISSUES)

Consider how the atmosphere of the day care environment reflects pleasure, trust, comfort and control--supportive of active learning.

Respect for individual and group needs, as manifested by the "tone" of the place.

Signs of the children's awareness of each other and their pleasure in interactions with others.

Provision for a variety of affective responses, social interactions and a change of pace during the long day at the center.

Climate conducive to spontaneity, enthusiasm and a whole range of appropriate affects.

Opportunity for children to become deeply involved in learning activities in the context of viable interactions.

Control as a means to facilitate child's learning; guidance approach to behavioral difficulties; supports for children to deal with stress in ways that enhance their coping abilities.

Freedom for children to make legitimate choices within clearly delineated limits.

Predominance of constructive activities over "busy work"; motivation for children to engage in self-initiated learning.

Encouragement for children to raise questions, develop ideas and check their perceptions (in preference to passive compliance.)

Support and validation by this environment of children's progress, what ever its extent or sphere.

***Observer's suggestions regarding the socio-emotional climate of the day care center.

(To facilitate the evaluation of these Issues, in regard to a given center, a number of VARIABLES, directly observable in the setting, are suggested by the questions on the following pages.)

C. PROGRAM: 3. Socio-Emotional Climate (VARIABLES)

Note: The quality of a learning environment of a center both finds expression in and is determined by the social-emotional atmosphere. Since tension and hostility are roadblocks to learning, a program which provides a sense of affective and social well-being contributes to the children's development in significant ways. After observing with the aid of the following questions (VARIABLES) and assessing the socio-emotional climate in terms of the ISSUES, the observer may wish to return to other aspects of the program and trace the interrelationships of the various categories. This will allow an overall assessment of the learning environment of a day care center, based on concrete and detailed evidence.

3.1 Describe the "tone" of the place: Is there a pervasive atmosphere of pleasure and well being (in the whole center as well as in specific classes, indoors, outdoors, etc.) or does the atmosphere feel strained or tense? What makes you feel that this is a place for children? (Does it feel more like a place arranged for the convenience of adults? e.g., Are visits to the classroom planned and regulated or do people troop through the rooms at any old time or in other ways disturb, or interfere with, the program?) How does the atmosphere contribute to a child's self-esteem, his confidence as a competent learner; how does it support the development of self-regulated responsible social behavior?

3.2 How are good working and learning conditions assured? (e.g., do children have minimal interference with their activities, get the supplies they need in order to follow through on a project, etc.)

3.3 Does observer hear a good deal of spontaneous laughter, exclamations of excitement related to activities? Is there usually a sound of "busy children" in this room? Is the sound level depressed or subdued, is it harshly noisy, grating on the ears? When the noise level suddenly increases to an ugly pitch, how does the teacher calmly restore a pleasant atmosphere?

3.4 At the times when this is appropriate, do most children move around the room freely, selecting materials and engaging in play activities by themselves as well as with others?

3.5 Is it easy to orient oneself and to "make sense out of" this room, i.e., is it organized, with an obvious logical arrangement or is the room chaotic, sloppy, confusing (do children look confused and is observer confused as to what is going on)?

3. Socio-Emotional Climate (VARIABLES) Con't.

3.6 What evidence do children give of being aware of one another and of enjoying each other at least intermittently? Are natural choice groupings encouraged or does teacher frequently arrange for groups of children to play together?

3.7 Is there an easy mix of group play and solitary play? Is there opportunity for quiet reflection as well as for exuberance? Describe.

3.8 Can you tell that children are permitted to watch others and to turn down the teacher's suggestions for activities?

3.9 In what ways do teachers encourage children to help each other?

3.10 Do children show evidence of being able to carry through on their own decisions?

3.11 May children turn down a teacher's suggestion and substitute their own ideas without a teacher getting "uptight" about it? Do teachers solicit suggestions from children? (Are these accepted and used or are they ridiculed because they are not what the teacher really wanted?)

3.12 Does the teacher convey pleasure in her handling of the children or does she seem easily irritated by them?

3.13 Do most children ask for help easily or do they seem to hesitate? (Describe) Do they seem pleased when the teacher approaches or do they "clam up", become tense? Are children generally eager to respond to teacher's questions or do they tend to look around, waiting for some other child to answer?

3.14 Do children talk to teachers on a variety of issues or is soliciting adult approval the major approach behavior of the children?

3.15 Do teachers really listen to what children say and act upon the children's ideas and contributions or do they merely let the child talk and then go right ahead and go on with their own ideas? Give examples.

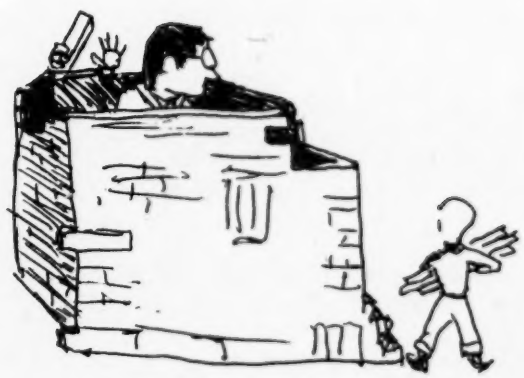
3.16 Note the <u>range</u> and the <u>appropriateness</u> of feelings expressed by the children.

3.17 When children terminate an activity, do they frequently indicate pleasure in the accomplishment (showing work to peers or teacher, putting it away carefully, surveying work with appreciative smile, etc.) or can many of the children be seen to destroy the work, to denigrate it, to compare it unfavorably with a "model"? (Note how the latter is handled by the teacher.)

3. Socio-Emotional Climate (VARIABLES) Con't.

3.18 Does the teacher praise the children's positive actions, helping them feel good about themselves (e.g., "John worked hard to help put the big blocks away")?

3.19 Describe how the teacher uses children's spontaneous responses to each other as a means to enhancing the children's self-esteem (e.g., "when Mary was crying, Ellen brought her a kleenex, that was her way of making Mary feel better" vs. "what a busybody you are, why don't you take care of your own business?")



3.20 In what manner does the teacher usually help a child in trouble? e.g., if a child has many aggressive outbursts, what kinds of constructive alternatives does the teacher give him for letting off steam (such as running outdoors, hammering, role play, etc.)?

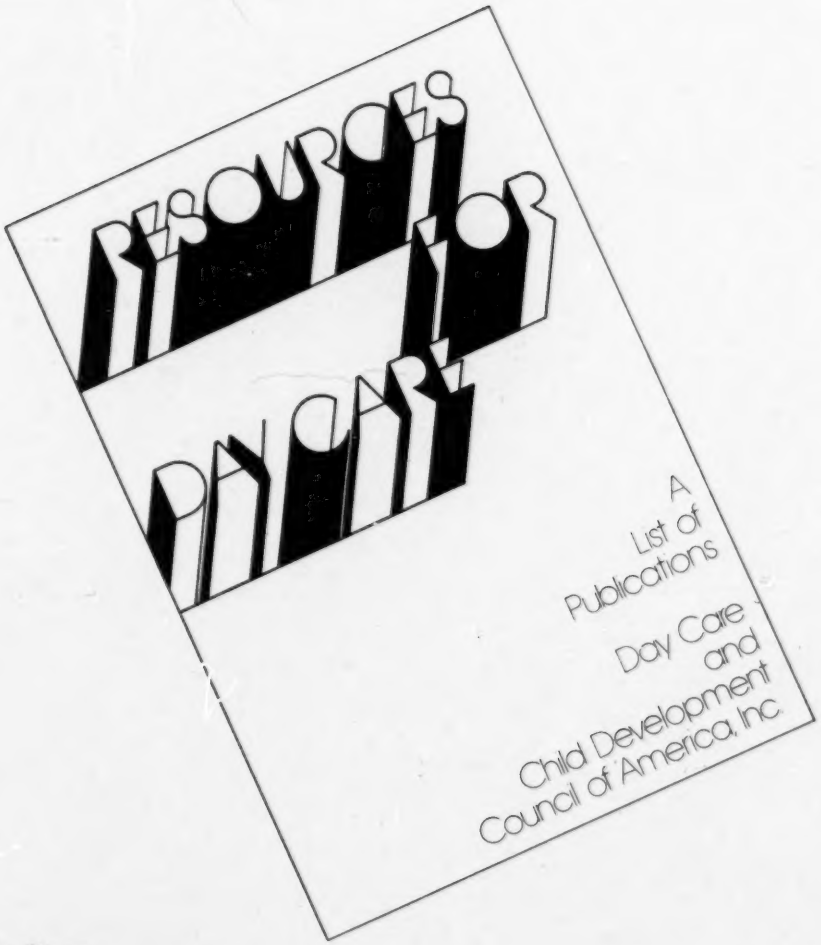
3.21 Are children more frequently engaged in meaningful learning activities than in "busy work" (some meaningless task to keep them occupied)?

3.22 Throughout the long day, are there many changes of pace or does the program remain essentially the same?

3.23 Is there opportunity for a child to be alone with one adult when he really needs this (as indicated by unhappiness, looking "lost" in a crowd, following an adult about for a long time, just waking up from a nap, etc.)?

3.24 What happens when the teacher leaves the room? (Do children continue their work or become visibly and audibly disorganized, or?)

(The data collected by observing may now be used for assessment of the ISSUES stated in the beginning of this section and finally for evaluation of the Issues from all categories of the LEARNING ENVIRONMENT OF A DAY CARE CENTER.)



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